

A
L E T T E R

FROM THE
AUTHOR OF AN ELUCIDATION

OF THE
UNITY OF GOOD,

J O H N

Lord Archbishop of CANTERBURY.

*Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth
Me, that I am the LORD.—Jeremiah ix. 24.*

Ille vero (Christus) exhibuit Deo fidem: docuit enim quod Unus
Deus sit; eumque Solum coli oportere: nec unquam seipsum
Deum dixit: quia non servasset fidem, si missus, ut Deos tolleret,
et unum afferet, induceret alium præter Unum.

Laelantius de vera sapientia.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR R. BALDWIN, PATER-NOSTER-ROW,

M D C C L X X X V .

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

This Letter is intended to be subjoined to a future Edition of the Author's *Elucidation of the Unity of God*, as they have an immediate connexion with each other. The *Elucidation* (to which the Letter refers) may be had of Mr. R. Baldwin, Bookseller, Pater-noster-Row.

TO HIS GRACE

J O H N

Lord Archbishop of CANTERBURY.

MY LORD,

ALTHOUGH the Principles, contained in my Endeavour to Elucidate the *Unity of God*, are opposed to a long prevailing Opinion in the Church over which you Preside; yet, I humbly presume, your Grace has not determined to refuse your attention to Arguments, that are seriously and temperately offered against that Opinion, especially when they are fairly brought from those very Records on which it is supposed to be founded. The Respect I feel for your sacred Function, secures me from giving you the least Intentional Offence. I have no Symptoms of such a design in my heart. And, therefore, I

flatter myself, that you will believe me, my Lord, when I declare, that nothing but an earnest desire to support the Truth, on an Article of the utmost Importance to Mankind, (in doing which I have taken Example from *very bigb Authority*) and to shew the agreement of Scripture to that Light which God himself implanted in us, hath prompted me to open myself to your Grace and to the world.

It will, indeed, appear evident, I hope, to every unbiassed Mind, that the abovementioned tract, to which I refer, contains not a presumptuous attempt to injure or to alter any part of the Religion of Christ, but that it is expressly designed to forward its GENERAL reception on its own Foundations; and to secure that Union and Peace in the Church, which are alone to be expected from a *strict* adherence to the revealed Will of God. Your Grace will be able to determine on this, if you should be pleased to honour that treatise with a perusal.

I beg leave to observe, that the zealous Inquirers into the true Object of Divine Worship, are sometimes, very irrationally, accused of an overweening Curiosity: it is said, that they do wrong in disturbing the Minds of themselves and others, by searching into Mysteries which are not on a level with our Understanding. Now without

but entering into any formal argument against this reasoning, a very plain answer may be given. That, if we would settle our Faith on substantial grounds, we must both *Search* and *Think*: and that when those Mysteries are perpetually brought forward in the Church, and warmly defended out of it, not as points merely Speculative, but, as Articles of *Belief* necessary to Salvation, we very naturally endeavour to comprehend them; and indeed they then become of too Important a nature to suffer the truly Religious Mind to remain Indifferent about them. Thus Men are unavoidably driven, if they regard their inward quiet, to seek for satisfaction to themselves; and to take refuge from the distractions of Controversy, under the peaceful safeguard of the Bible. What we have reason to lament, is, that the sacred writings have been violently wrested into mystic senses, which very often have no place but in the Imagination; and favourite Opinions have been defended, without any due regard to the allowed signification of words, to Grammar, or the general design of the Scriptures.

As such irregular modes of construction are never likely to fix our Religious Principles on a firm basis, I have endeavoured to confine myself to the most obvious Sense of Revelation, and it is my consolation, that I can humbly and openly appeal to the Great Judge of All, that if I have erred in the search of Him and his Truths, I have not erred

Wilfully. I could not possibly have sought my own Interest in so doing. In designedly trying to mislead others, I should certainly undermine my own tranquillity, without the smallest prospect of advantage; and surely no man of common sense will be charged with such consummate folly. The point I have contended for, is, indeed, of such infinite Importance, that, I readily own, I found myself unable, in the prosecution of my endeavours, to free myself from the deepest anxiety and fear, lest I should grossly err, and give offence in a matter wherein my future Peace and Happiness are so directly concerned. But I humbly rely on the Mercy and Compassion of God, in whom I have trusted and not in myself.

Conscientious motives prevailed on me not to conceal the result of my inquiries. To free others from Perplexity, as well as myself, and to prove by clear deductions, that the Bible doth not enforce an article of Faith repugnant to our inward suggestions, but that It is filled with confirmations of that first Principle, *the Unity of God*, which appears to be a Truth harmonizing with human Reason:—These have been my chief wishes and designs. Yet I am convinced, my Lord, with yourself and others, that even the steadfast Belief of this Great and leading Principle, and the consequences deducible from it, will avail us but little, unless the Moral excellencies, which

should

should arise from that Belief, are put in Practice. True Charity, Piety, Virtue, Integrity, are essentials in true Religion, and the stipulated means of our acceptance with GOD.

THE History of Europe, as your Lordship well knows, records the most melancholy Proofs how far Men, in support of their several Systems, have departed from Christian Charity. Human Nature shudders at the Relation, and is relieved alone by reflecting on that Light and Liberality which, by the favour of God, now pervade and Dignify the Minds of Men almost throughout Christendom.

The Maxim which so long prevailed, that the Gift of God, our *distinguishing Faculty*, is a Guide by no means to be trusted in our Religious researches;—this fatal notion, craftily taught, and too readily imbibed in Superstitious Ages, de-throned *Reason*; and the Blessings and Promises of the Gospel were then secreted in the hands of Tyranny, or consigned to the blind and merciless Authority of *Zeal without Knowledge*.

These interested endeavours to shut out the light of Reason, or to render it useless, in a great measure succeeded, and, in consequence, an almost universal Darkness overspread the Christian World; which has dissipated but by slow degrees.

Surprising as it may appear on reflection to some; it seems to have been but lately allowed that, a Man can neither, in fact, be compelled to Believe, nor can possibly Believe as he pleases; but that, if he Thinks at all, his real Belief must flow from the dictates of his own Conscience; a Tribunal which no Mortal Power can Command! This is an everlasting Truth; and it is from Mens Ignorance of it, or their want of attention to it, that all the shameful Cruelties of Persecution, on account of Religious opinions, have ever taken their rise. It is not possible for Ignorance to expose itself more ridiculously, than in manifesting a Belief, that any human Authority can Force the Consciences of Men, since it certainly is not in the power of themselves to do it if they would. Whenever, therefore, this has been attempted, (as it has been too often) the Tryal has universally ended as all tryals must do that are made to effect Impossibilities. But Mankind as they become more enlightened, become not only more reasonable, but, very naturally, more Merciful also; and those Enormities which were formerly committed by Bigots of all Persuasions, and which we now read of with equal horror and astonishment, are never likely, by the Goodness of God, to infest the Earth again.

The Powers of Conscience may indeed be suppressed by Tyranny for a time, but cannot be finally subdued. We may smother the Flame without

without extinguishing the Fire. When that Excellent Man, Archbishop Cranmer, harassed by his merciless enemies, and overcome by the weakness of human Nature, signed an Abjuration of those Principles which Reason and Reflection had taught him to adopt; how little did the Terrors of the bitterest Cruelty and misguided Zeal at last Avail? At the instant of his Death, what an affecting and glorious Example did he give of the Triumph of Conscience over All!

Thus much I will venture to predict. That in whatsoever Christian Country, the People shall be indulged without exception, in the Free Exercise of their *Religious* Principles *; that Country will be the *First* (and Great-Britain bids fair for it) that will be permanently settled on the Firm Basis of the *Gospel* and Reason. All material deviations will purge themselves by degrees, or be soon expunged by the unshackled Efforts of serious and attentive Minds: whereas Restraint and Persecution of all kinds, Experience has taught us, serve only to inflame Prejudices and Fix them, and to render even Contradictions and Absurdities Sacred.

* This observation is positively restricted to *Religious* Principles; purely and conscientiously such, i. e. such as are, in themselves, abstracted from any worldly or Political motives whatsoever.

Yet,

Yet, my Lord, I am very far from being unfriendly to an *Established* Form of Worship; I conceive it hardly possible for Society to subsist without it. I believe it to be absolutely essential to the Welfare and Peace of the World, and full of general Utility; Provided that, the fundamental Principles of this Establishment are grounded Solely and Clearly on the *Scriptures*. For the generality of Men have neither Ability, Leisure, nor (it is to be feared in many instances) Inclination to plan for themselves any rational and well-adapted Form of Religious Worship: and the Positive Necessity of preserving a constant and well-ordered Attention to the ALMIGHTY, must be obvious to All Mankind; as it most certainly is, and must for ever be, an object of the Highest concern to all rational Beings. Still there is no sort of necessity to *Constrain* men to join in any particular Mode of Worship whatsoever: this is much better left freely to their own Consciences, to that inextinguishable Light of God which is placed in the breast of every man; and we may rest *assured*, that the Form which is found by Experience to be the Clearest, the most Rational, and, especially, the most consonant to the plain Doctrines of the *Scriptures*, will at length prevail over all others; and be *Directly* and *Cordially* embraced by all those who are truly Pious, Discerning, and Learned:—and it is well enough known

known what effect this would naturally have on the Commonalty.

Neither do I apprehend, my Lord, that the Difficulty of Establishing such a Liturgy, *expressly Scriptural*, as is here wished, is by any means so great as is usually pretended. The Work is already, in a good measure, done. Our present Book of Common Prayer, is filled, in general, with Noble and Exalted forms of Service, and, in order to make them highly satisfactory to all truly Religious men, want only to be purged from those Expressions which are little understood, or evidently inconsonant to the general tenor of the Bible, and repugnant to the natural suggestions of our own Consciences.

I thank God that my Mind is warm with Charity to all. I am from Experience taught to consider the painful Difficulty of rooting out those Prejudices which have been imbibed as it were with our Nurse's Milk; and I greatly rejoice in the certainty, that very large allowances will be made by our most Wise and Merciful Creator, for all our unavoidable Errors. As to Errors which are ascribable to Indolence, or want of due attention in those who have the means and the Power of correcting them; in whatsoever degree *such* may remain among Men, it is certain that the Simple and Illiterate are not directly chargeable therewith.

with. Let Them be answerable for Mine, says the unlettered Husbandman, under whose Conduct I approach the Altar.

WITH all reasonable allowances for the gross Ignorance and Darkness of former Centuries, and the Prejudices they have left upon us; it yet appears wonderful and mortifying that, the *proper Object* of Religious Worship, should not have been long since irreversibly *Fixed*; and maintained not only by a few, but by all Thinking and Learned Men. Because, not only the general tenour of Revealed Religion, but also *Universal Nature* proclaims the great truth of the *Unity of the Deity*.—The *Similarity* of Construction in the Greater Bodies around us: The nice *Dependencies* preserved in all the Lesser:—in a word, the whole visible Creation discovers to human Reason, *One uniform connected Design* throughout; and demonstrates to reflecting Beings, that All Things were formed by *One Mind*; that they are universally the Effects of the *Same Great Cause*; and, from their invariable Evolutions, are certainly and constantly under the very same Direction. God has taken care that we should have more reasons than one to believe them to be so; and, I think, He has interwoven the Truth of His *Unity* in our very Nature, if we would attend to its operations. I shall endeavour to shew this by a familiar instance: But I beg leave to introduce it rather as an accessory

circumstance, than as a necessary Argument; for after what has been produced in the Elucidation, and by Others, such assistances, I conceive, are but little wanted.

WHENEVER a Multiplicity of Objects are presented to the Mind, we find it necessary, in order to Contemplate with any accuracy, to confine ourselves to *One*, and drop all the rest. A consequence ever unavoidable while the *Thinking Principle* is closely engaged. And hence it arrives that the *Unity* of God forces itself upon us in the Act of Devotion, from the *Indivisibility of Thought*. For we may observe, that, when we address ourselves *intently* in Prayer, we find it impossible to *Fix* our Meditation absolutely, on more than *One* Object of Worship at the same moment. All others are neglected in the instant, and cannot enter the Mind without confusing and dissipating the Attention. This alone plainly shews, that the mental Faculties are not calculated to attend *Fixedly* to more than *One* Object. We may, indeed, *Associate* Three or more different Things or Persons in Idea, and then consider them in *One Collective* view; but this doth not destroy their *Individuality*; and when we would contemplate any one of these Objects with Precision, we must dismiss the Combination. Or we may *Blend* three or more distinct Things or Subjects together in Idea, and then consider them in the Aggregate as *One*; but besides that this,

this is a meer work of the Imagination, it would be held both dissatisfactory and dangerous with respect to the *Trinity*; because we are expressly enjoined, in our present received Doctrines, to preserve the *Distinction* of the *Three Persons*, and acknowledge Them to be not only separate, but also *Equal Objects* of Prayer and Thanksgiving. Notwithstanding this, in the solemn Acts of Devotion, the Mind betrays an *Election* for one or the other: and this Preference, we find, is naturally and generally given to *God Himself*, though every other Object is excluded from the Mind *at the time*. For *He* incessantly arises in the Collected Soul, and Fills it. Thus the Great Truth of the *Unity* of the Deity, seems to have been implanted by Him in our Nature, and the Mind of man, in its most serious and attentive moments, necessarily led to acknowledge it. In Praying to, or Glorifying the *Trinity in their Turns*, we still give the Precedence to the *FATHER*; but, by a positive Distinction in their *Persons*, and in our *Worship*, we unavoidably destroy the very Notion of *One only God*, and, as I apprehend, overthrow the Great Basis of Revealed Religion.

What will naturally follow from these observations, is this. That as the Indivisibility of Thought, will not permit us to Pray *Fixedly* to more than *One Object* at the same time; *for the very attempt to Divide the Attention confuses it*; therefore

therefore we are compelled, if we hold to the Athanasian System, to invoke, and Worship the *Three Persons* of the Trinity in a separate manner, as we find is done*. Thus when we Worship the *Father*, we Adore a Person *different* from the Son, or the Holy Ghost: and when we Worship *These*, we adore two Persons both *different* from the *Father* and from each other. For, howsoever They may be connected, Their *Persons* are to be preserved *distinctly* in the Mind, and Their Worship, of course, to be *distinct* also. Now under these circumstances, it appears impossible, from the very Nature of Thought, to free ourselves from the Idea of their being *Three distinct Gods*. For since we cannot Divide our *Attention*, (which if we could, would be the highest disrespect to the Person meant to be adored) it must be always *Changed* with the *Object* of our Worship; and then it inevitably follows, that every Other must be Neglected *at the time*; and *these are exactly the Consequences with all Polytheism whatsoever*: from which, therefore, I humbly apprehend, it is extremely difficult to Distinguish the present System. But on the other hand, If we *Blend* the *Three Persons* together, and consider Them as *One* and the *Same Being*; then the Athanasian hypothesis is destroyed, and any *Distinct* Worship appears totally Superfluous and Contradictory.

* In the *Litany*, in many of the *Collects*, &c.

I beg

I beg that I may not be misunderstood in making these reflections: They are intended in support of those passages in the *Bible* which render the Worship of God so easy to the Mind, by plainly and positively declaring that He is *One*; —and are not brought forward from any vain desires of Disputation.

I have never been able to meet with any Exposition of the Athanasian scheme that seemed at all satisfactory: on the contrary, even the best of those which I have seen, all appear to me, to be intermixed with perpetual and inevitable contradictions. A Learned Writer, of some rank in the Church, has very lately declared, as his Belief, “that there must be *Differences* in the *Three Persons* of the Trinity, and gradual *Subordination*.” Yet, in the same breath he insists that *They* are strictly *One Being*, the *Same God*, and *Equal* in all Perfections. Here we find that, *Difference* and *Identity*, *Subordination* and *Equality*, are made synonymous terms. Is not this illustrating the Athanasian Creed by the Creed of Athanasius? Indeed the tenets just mentioned, are hardly so guarded as those of this famous Creed, and while words retain their acknowledged meaning, such modes of Expression are altogether as unintelligible or contradictory as the Edict on which they are founded. The same learned Author has likewise suggested that, “the *Differences* of the *Three Persons*,

Persons, can only consist in Their Personal Properties." Now if their *Personal Properties* be *Different*, this, indeed, sufficiently declares a *positive distinction*, and will shew them not to be the *Same*, but *Three distinct Beings or Gods*; since a *difference of Properties* is the surest mark of *Distinction* between one Being and another.

Ingenious Men have endeavoured (doubtless often from very upright motives,) to support this incomprehensible Doctrine, by deep comments and laboured Interpretations. Every passage throughout the Bible, that affords the most distant colour of an Argument, has been laid hold of and forced into the Service. But their efforts hitherto, have not been able to stifle the Divisions which have unhappily so long prevailed on this essential article of Religion. The searching out mystical meanings in Scripture, and deducing far-fetched conclusions from passages that may be somewhat obscure, appears to me to be seeking Darkness rather than Light; an endless unprofitable undertaking, making an Enigma of the Bible, and, consequently, productive of great and dangerous Confusion; as is plain from the strange and contrary opinions which have arisen from time to time, from this way of construing the sacred Writings. Surely it would be better to recede from this precarious unsettled mode of explication, and not give such implicit Faith to

Those who think themselves keen enough to see even beyond the Truth itself.

WITH respect to the Important Point before us, namely, *the Divine Unity*, the true Way is indeed very far from being either Dark or Intricate. We have but this Alternative, either to abide by the Strongest and Clearest Evidence, or follow that which is less Strong and less Clear. It is hardly conceivable that any rational Being, were he left to himself, would hesitate upon which to chuse. Every serious and sensible Christian would, above all things, be most happy to be Clear in his Religious Creed; as he must feel and own that, in general, no solid Virtues, no rational Faith, nothing above a Clouded Piety can be expected in Men who Profess a Religious System, the fundamental Principles of which, they ingenuously confess they cannot Understand. May not such Men, without much presumption, be justly said to *Worship they know not what?* and while they remain in this doubtful and confused state, the influence of Religion on their Minds, must be feeble, wavering, and, in a great measure, fruitless; and this observation we see verified in fact;—too often even among the most distinguished Characters.

Now, my Lord, instead of continuing to insist on those Doctrines, which, if they were at all explicable,

ble, are allowed to be beyond the Comprehension of the greater part of Mankind, and, of course, conduce little to Edification;—Suppose we were to go back to the Simplicity of the Gospel? Suppose, instead of destroying His Supremacy as far as in us lies, we were to Adore the *One God and Father of All; to Worship Him and Pray to Him alone, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ?* Wherein should we Err? Pardon me, my Lord, a moment while I ask whether our Ecclesiastic Governors, will allow this to be strictly consonant to the Sacred Doctrines or not? They surely cannot deny it. But Where, then, do we find so clear and so respectable Authority for the Worship of a *Trinity?* Neither, it seems, is this *word, nor this Worship* to be found in our *Bibles.* Notwithstanding the ingenious Zeal of later Ages, Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his Apostles, appear to have been wholly Strangers to so Complicated a System. Why, therefore, do we refuse ourselves the beneficial Happiness of giving HIM the peculiar Honour due unto His Glorious Name, Who is the Everlasting God and Benevolent Parent of the Universe? Hath not Christ and his Apostles, the holy Prophets of God, nay, even *God Himself,* plainly taught and encouraged us to do this? Let the World impartially examine the Sacred Volume, collect the Evidence, and say whether this Injunction be *Reiterated* or not. If it be, with what confusion shall we shortly appear before His Face,

with the Bible, perhaps our own Consciences, and even the whole surrounding Creation Witnesses against us ! If indeed, we have not erred Wilfully, or through Negligence, our Pardon is certain : but our Confusion and Regret may very possibly remain with us.

After all, it must be confessed that, such endeavours as these, to mark the plainest defects and incongruities of the present System, and to persuade a Reformation of them, will, in a great measure, be vain and ineffectual, while some are still determined to support the most manifest deviations at all Events, and others are so little inclined to attend to what is said against them. Even the greater number of Those to whom the care of our holy Religion is more immediately consigned, will not condescend to look into the Publications that are offered to their perusal, and which, at least in many instances, in the most disinterested manner, point out the stumbling-blocks which lay in their own way, and evidently Obstruct the most pious endeavours to fix the Religion of Christ in the hearts of Men.

In such a situation of things, all that can be done by those who have the Honour of our *Heavenly Father*, the Gospel of Christ, and their own Peace and Salvation truly at Heart, is, to declare openly, wherein they humbly apprehend, Men have departed from the *Faith that was once deli-*

delivered unto the Saints: and far from invidiously attacking the tenets of others, and at the same time concealing their own, lest they also should be found equally defective;—The honest Professors of Christianity, putting away all bitterness of spirit, should deliver to the World their own Principles with humility, but with firmness and sincerity;—freely offer them to the severest Scrutiny of rational Inquirers, and leave their merits and their Truth to be decided by the sacred Oracles of God. I shall therefore deliver, what I conceive to be, the Religious Principles of an Unitarian Christian.

ZEALOUS to walk in a plain and well-enlightened Path, the Unitarian Christian, in contradiction to all the complex Systems of Human device, maintains, that the All-Glorious God of the Universe, is simply and absolutely ONE (*a*). That there is no God WITH HIM (*b*), nor LIKE HIM (*f*), nor EQUAL to HIM (*): and consequently, that *He* alone is the True God; that *He* alone is the Great Object of all Religious Adoration (†.) And it is further maintained, that it is altogether impossible, that the Prophets and Apostles, speaking as they did by divine Inspira-

(*a*) Deut. vi. 4. Mark xii. 29. 1 Cor. viii. 4. 6.

(*b*) Deut. xxxii. 89.

(*f*) Isa. xlvi. 9.

(*) Isa. xl. 25. xlvi. 5.

(†) Exod. xxxiv. 14. Matt. vi. 6, 9, &c.

tion, could have asserted the *Unity* of God so Clearly and Positively as they have done, unless it were *strictly* true; and incapable of any Dangerous or Erroneous consequences whatsoever, when *directly* adopted by Mankind as a Principle most Sacred and Inviolable *.

The Son of God is deeply Reverenced by the Unitarian Christian, as his Mediator, High Priest, and great Deliverer: Commissioned by the FATHER to lead Men into the knowledge of Him, *the Only true God*, and into the way of Life Eternal†. That accordingly the Doctrines and Precepts of our blessed Saviour and his Apostles, are to

* With respect to the *Holy Spirit*, I beg leave to observe, that whenever the FATHER is Worshiped, the holy Spirit is included in *Him*, i. e. not adored as a *distinct* Being; since to make the holy Spirit a *distinct Person* from the Father, is, I humbly apprehend, to make a *Distinction* without a *Difference*, and inclines immediately to *Polytheism*. For the *holy Spirit*, from the general import of the sacred writings, is the *Spirit of God*, or *God Himself*, who is indeed the **GREAT AND UNIVERSAL SPIRIT**. And thus this point must have been considered by Christ and his Apostles; otherwise, in order to prevent Error or Neglect, They would have certainly made a positive *Distinction*, in their forms of *Worship and Glorification*, between the *Holy Ghost* and the *Father*, If They were *different and Equal Persons*. But no such *distinct Worship* is to be found in the *Scriptures*. There are some, indeed, who, struck with this circumstance, think, nevertheless, that, by the *Holy Spirit* may be meant a *distinct* and *Subordinate Agent*, tho' not an *Object of Divine Worship*. This notion, standing thus, may have no improper consequences: But the above opinion, it is humbly conceived, appears more consonant to the *general tenour* of *holy Writ*. And it seems a very unsatisfactory Expedient to single out a few (perhaps doubtful) passages, and oppose them to the whole *Body of the Scriptures*.

† John xvii. 3.

be

be esteemed as the unalterable Rules of the Christian's Life ; to be strictly adhered to, and punctually obeyed ; to be fixed in his Heart, and uniformly manifested in his Actions. That not Obedience only, but also Love, Gratitude, Honour and Veneration, are due to Christ in a very high degree from all Mankind. And lastly, that, as his Disciples, we are authorized and encouraged to make use of his *Name* on all occasions in our Worship of ALMIGHTY GOD ; to whose Divine Majesty we thus approach by our blessed Mediator.

It is upon this solid Basis that the Unitarian Christian rests his Hope : Worshiping God in Spirit and in Truth, and rejoicing in Christ Jesus. For *to us there is but One God, THE FATHER, of whom are all things, and we in him ; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.* 1 Cor. viii. 6. The simplicity of the above Creed enables it to be clearly understood by all Men ; and the Records on which it is directly founded, will probably incline those who believe in Revelation, to think that it contains a glorious Truth.

But if there be any thing materially wrong in it, or absurd, or contrary to the plain Doctrines of the Gospel ; in the Name of God, let it be pointed out : for no man in his senses, I think,

would Err in his Religion if he could possibly avoid it. I am sure, my Lord, that if I (who am most willing to learn) could have been by any assistance satisfied, that the Worship of the *Trinity* is as clearly deducible from Scripture, as the Worship of the *One God and Father of All*; I should have been saved from an anxiety of Mind which I am unable to express.

Am I, or is any Man blameable for such anxiety? is it Weakness? An Indifference to RELIGION and its Truths, is Destruction in every sense of the word: It is the real Source of all the Moral Corruptions that infest the Human Race. This Indifference to Religion (if it does not proceed from the most thoughtless Stupidity) must arise from a disbelief of its *Principles*; or from a Persuasion that whether its *Precepts* are obeyed or not, it will be of equal Consequence to us. It is enough, I hope, to observe to the most negligent Reader, that this last opinion leads directly to *Atheism*, and at once destroys the very notion of an Omniscient and Just Governor of the Universe. As to a disbelief of the leading Principles of any particular System, it behoves the virtuous among Men, to shew, if it be possible, that such Incredulity has no Rational foundation. Every method should be tried, every fair Argument brought forward, to remove Impediments that may render the paths of Religion clouded

clouded or intricate, which above all things, it is to be wished, should be most clear.

CHRISTIANITY in its natural and most amiable Form, presents nothing to the Mind of man that is gloomy or contradictory : It utters nothing but Peace and Comfort to the Soul : and will be found to agree with Reason in all her genuine Principles. The Light of the Gospel of Christ kindly blends itself with the Light of Reason and increases its Lustre ; and, whatever Divines may have formerly held, it is this Union that gives solid satisfaction to the human Heart.

I am not allowed to hope from the aspect of the present day, that I shall live to see any material Reformation in our forms of Worship. But of this I am confident, that such a Reform will in future take place *. I apprehend that the Truth of the Sacred Writings is directly engaged in this Issue. Until the Gospel is preached in its

* How can we possibly think that, the charitable and merciful Spirit of pure Christianity, is properly retained in a *Church*, wherein we hear Everlasting perdition solemnly denounced, without any exception or qualification, against all those who do not, (perhaps cannot) Believe exactly as *She* dictates ? or rather, as some of the most violent Zealots were pleased to dictate in the darkest Ages. Surely that *Wisdom descendeth not from Above*, which first confounds the Understanding, and then leaves the most dreadful Curse on the very Doubts *itself* has raised !—Yet this seems to be the *Wisdom*, and this the *Mercy* which we find in a certain *Creed*.

original Purity, the Nations of the Earth, we see, are not likely *to become the Kingdoms of the LORD and of His Christ.* And yet, so sure as the Bible is true, this great Event must arrive, and the *Prophecies* be Fulfilled. Happy indeed! will They be, who shall become the blessed Instruments of accomplishing them;—By calling back the Christian Faith to its primeval Purity and Simplicity; and clearing it entirely from that heavy Cloud of Superstition and Error which has enwrapped it for Ages! A Departure from the Truth was plainly foretold; and although *the Sun of Righteousness* has happily arisen with brighter Beams on our Land, our Impurities are not yet exhaled; Their remains are conspicuous, and mark the force and truth of the Prophecy.

The confining ourselves within the narrow Pale of our Forefathers, betrays an inexcusable Indolence, and a manifest lukewarmness for the *further propagation of the Gospel.* It may be considered as a certain Fact, that the Wise and Benevolent Author of Nature, plainly intends, (notwithstanding some partial exceptions) that the Rational part of his Creation shall not Decline; shall not become less enlightened; more ignorant and depraved; but shall assuredly move forward, by gradual steps, in the paths of useful Knowledge and Improvement. If this be granted, how contradictory to these gracious designs doth it appear,
that,

that we should implicitly rely on our remote Ancestors for our present Opinions and Practice, and by obstinately or supinely continuing on the same ground, contract all our Ideas within the Circle of their Knowledge?

I believe, however, that this last is far from being now the prevailing Inclination. The necessary Distinction between sound Faith and thoughtless Credulity, is no longer *Heretical*. I greatly rejoice when I reflect, that no inconsiderable number of our most respectable Clergy, not only conceive themselves to be bound in their Profession, by some very hard and illiberal Engagements of human construction, but, many of them, are also sensible, that some further Amendments in our doxologies, and Forms of Worship, are become absolutely necessary: They justly think, that these may be rendered more generally unexceptionable and safe, *By reducing them to a more direct congruity with those of the Scriptures.* Were this measure strictly adopted, it must prevent all controversy and uneasiness, on the point in question, (at least among the reasonable part of Mankind) so long as our holy Records are considered as the incontestable Rules of our Faith. It would be most Injurious to suppose, that those Reverend Gentlemen who are zealous for so desirable a Reform, have not the welfare of Christianity as much at Heart as their

Opposers,

Opposers. Their wishes can proceed from nothing but a watchful and conscientious attention to Religion, and a sincere love of it; with a conviction of its infinite Importance to the World when rightly understood: and they well discern, that if such a step were taken, it would at once free the *Whole* from a weight of anxiety and vexation, which every honest Man would be happy to see them fairly rid of.

MY LORD, If what has been said should, upon the whole, appear worthy of any regard; The exalted Station in which Divine Providence hath been pleased to place your Grace, enables you to direct the means of such Relief in these most Important matters, as your Wisdom shall suggest. Your Lordship is undoubtedly well acquainted, that at this juncture, The Public attention is powerfully attracted towards the present Inquiry into the *True Object* of Religious Worship; a Subject surely the most Interesting that can engage the human Mind.—That the Inquirers into this momentous Article, are numerous and respectable—That the Foundations of our Faith are not now assailed by the shallow and contemptible disquisitions of Atheists and Libertines; but are searched into by Men whose Characters are unimpeachable, whose Abilities, and Zeal in support of Christianity, are equally ardent and conspicuous, and who assuredly have

have their own inward quiet, and salvation at heart, (of which some of them have given the most unquestionable proofs) tho' the World may not have candour enough to allow that their endeavours reach further than to themselves. Whatever may be the Event of these Inquiries, this is certain, that they never could have arisen among such Men, if our present Doctrines had been clearly founded on the Scriptures and sound Reason.

“ Let us, therefore, be intent on studying the
 “ pure word of God; and careful to interpret it
 “ in such a manner, as may do most honour to
 “ its author; and at all times encourage a free
 “ and an impartial study of it. ‘Tis now high
 “ time to do this, and to awake out of sleep, since
 “ our Reformation is much nearer than when we
 “ first believed; and it is to be wished, that we
 “ ourselves, could be persuaded to examine our
 “ own state;—that we were disposed to help and
 “ forward, rather than check the progress of
 “ every serious enquiry; and stop any farther
 “ improvements in the knowledge of that, which
 “ of all things deserves, and wants them most;
 “ rather than withstand a general reformation in
 “ Religion, by rigorously insisting on, and ob-
 “ truding such things for doctrine, as are the
 “ commandments of men, and very foreign to the
 “ essence of it; instead of either entertaining that
 “ Anti-

“ Antichristian kind of spirit, which calls down
 “ fire from heaven on all who don’t receive us ;
 “ which delights in straitening the way that leads
 “ to Life, and shutting up the kingdom of
 “ heaven against men ; or else incurring the woe
 “ denounced against those hypocrites, who are
 “ desirous of lading men with heavy burthens,
 “ and binding upon them things which are too
 “ grievous to be borne ; and which they know,
 “ that none need touch with one of their fingers.

“ As we see the faults and follies of past ages,
 “ a double woe will be to us, if, instead of taking
 “ warning by them, and avoiding the like ; we
 “ are resolved to tread the same steps, and fill up
 “ the measure of our fathers *.”

If then, your Lordship should, happily, be inclined to forward any proper measures for the further purifying our forms of Worship, in doing which, without doubt, the Christian Scriptures would be taken as the directive Lights : It is then that the true Disciples of Christ *would rejoice with exceeding great Joy* : since such an Amendment could have no other end, than the ensuring the most durable Happiness to Mankind ; by giving

* Bishop of Carlisle’s Theory of Religion, &c. Page 190, 5th Edition.

birth to that substantial Piety, wherein the Heart and the Understanding also sincerely Unite. And I am, with many others, grossly deceived, if the EPOCHA would not be as glorious for your Grace, through all Posterity, as it would be highly advantageous to Christianity. You would not want the ready assistance of many among the most Valuable and Learned of your Clergy, and you have this Peculiar advantage, that it would be impossible to charge your Grace, in such an important undertaking, with any Sinister views or Worldly motives whatsoever. May the same Almighty Being who hath called you into your Eminent State in the Church, inspire you to do that which is right in His sight, and enable you to lead your extensive Flock in the true Paths of Righteousness and Peace.

I conclude this Letter with an earnest Prayer. That the God of Truth may condescend to guide and support All those who are labouring in its Cause. That CHRISTIANITY may flourish in its utmost Extent. That Mankind may enjoy all those permanent Blessings, which may be expected from a steady Obedience to its *Divine Precepts*. And, especially, that we may never fail in our deepest Gratitude to HIM, from Whom those Precepts were truly Derived *; nor in our

* John vii. 16. xii. 49, 50.

sincerest

sincerest Love to that benevolent Being who Delivered them. Now, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to Him who is the FATHER of Mercies and the God of all Comfort, Be Glory, Adoration and Gratitude in the Highest, to all Eternity. Amen.

I am, my Lord,
With the greatest Respect,
Your Grace's very Humble
And most Obedient Servant,

JAMES GIFFORD,

*Jas. 27.
1785.*

Second.

